



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

18th Harvest Week

July 25th – 31st, 2005

Season 10

What's in the box this week: (stuff that's in one size share that's *not* in the other is at the top of its respective list so you can easily see the difference. Remember, small shares will generally have smaller quantities of the duplicate items. – Debbie)

Family Share:

Forono beets (bagged)
Cucumbers
Garlic
Radishes
Broccoli
Green beans
Leeks
Lettuce
Potatoes
Purslane
Summer squash
Strawberries

Small Share:

Broccoli
Green beans
Leeks
Lettuce
Potatoes
Purslane
Summer squash
Strawberries

Extra Fruit Option:

Cherry tomatoes, European plums, and a basket of either raspberries or blackberries

In this week's share I would like to introduce you to a "wild vegetable" which has been eaten for centuries in many parts of the world, it's called Purslane (*Portulaca Oleracea*) and at this time of year grows readily among our "other" vegetables. Purslane is a multi-stemmed succulent with small, oval leaves (see picture in Debbie's recipe database). This "exotic wild vegetable" might already be a mainstay in your backyard without you knowing about its rich culinary tradition. The USDA lists purslane as a pervasive weed (the 7th worst worldwide) but to many of us who love its earthy, slightly acidic flavor and crisp, succulent stems and leaves, the word "weed" hardly seems fair. Most of the time we call plants weeds because they appear uninvited almost anywhere, here on the farm I try to coexist instead of fighting them and right now we have a beautiful crop of purslane growing together with a maturing crop of beets. You will probably read this with suspicion thinking 'Farmer Tom has really lost his mind trying to make us eat weeds' but I really believe that many of our so-called weeds are actually both tasty and nutritious. Besides the popular purslane, other "culinary weeds" popular among gourmet restaurants and often used as salad greens are lambs quarters, dandelions, mallow, pigweed, thistle, sorrel, and even cattails. So don't be shy about cooking with purslane. Maybe you can look at your weeds with a different eye recognizing that they could be a healthy addition to your diet.

Although Purslane is rarely seen as a cooking vegetable here in the United States, this green has a long and interesting history. English medieval cooks and gardeners loved purslane and the ancient Greeks made flour from purslane seeds and pickled its fleshy stems. Today it's often served fresh in salads, either alone or with other salad greens. Juan tells me that in his hometown in the State of Guanajuato they like to cook purslane (commonly known in Spanish as verdolagas) with chili peppers, eggs and pork. And in China its sharp flavor and slightly slippery quality is valued in combination with noodle dishes. I like to chop clusters of young fresh leaves and combine them with other "sweeter" vegetables such as potatoes, cucumbers, beets, and tomatoes (they're coming). It can also be added to fish, grills and omelets by simply sprinkling the Purslane leaves with coarse salt, lemon juice and olive oil.

On a healthier note, recent research has confirmed that purslane is one of the best vegetable sources of omega-3 fatty acids, as well as carotene and vitamin C. No wonder historically purslane was described as a blood cleansing remedy to cure heart and liver problems and also help diabetics. – Tom

Field Notes from Farmer Tom

In the Family Share this week you are getting beets which have been topped and bagged,

"Who we are and who we become is dependent in large part on whom we love."

*- Nina Simons,
from "Voices of the Bioneers"*

Live Earth Farm 2005 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

- July 29, 30, and 31 Children's Mini Camp (full)
Friday evening to noon Sunday
- Sat Aug 6 Permaculture workshop #1
Design methods; Ecological observation and Site Mapping
- Sat Sept 17 Permaculture workshop #2
Swale Design and Construction
- Sat Sept 24 Fall Equinox Celebration
3 – 9 pm
- Sat Oct 22 Halloween Pumpkin Palooza
- Sat Nov 5 Permaculture workshop #3
Polycultures & Agroforestry; Food Forest Design and Installation

only because the recent heat has made the tops rather unattractive. Just like with the carrots earlier in the season, these are *not* stored beets. They are freshly harvested, topped and then bagged. Just no leafy green tops for the time being.

For those of you who get the extra fruit option, over the next 2-3 weeks you will be getting beautiful European plums. They are a bit more tart, and in this country are commonly turned into prunes. In Europe it is popular to eat them fresh, or use them to make delicious fruit tarts. If you decide to turn them into prunes you can dry them in the sun on trays.

Lastly (drumroll...) the news we've all been waiting for: this week we are starting to pick our first cherry tomatoes! By next week everyone should start getting at least a basket as a part of their share. A more prolific melon harvest will start next week, and sweet corn soon thereafter. Peppers (hot and sweet) and eggplants are almost ready for harvesting in sufficient quantities to make it into shares (1-2 weeks), maybe along with the tomatoes my crystal ball is showing me. 🍷

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact me at deb@writerguy.com or 408.288.9469. (Visit the recipes link on our website for a comprehensive list of recipes 'by key ingredient' (pictures too!). Includes recipes from newsletters back to 1998.)

Since I already have a good supply of purslane cooking ideas (and a good picture) in the recipe database on our website, and since Tom gave a few suggestions above, I won't add more here. You purslane lovers out there already know what to do, and if it's new to you, check out the database! Meanwhile, I recently was given a copy of one of the many Moosewood cookbooks, "Moosewood Restaurant Low-fat Favorites." I'm not a proponent of 'low-fat' per se, nevertheless there were a bunch of good sounding recipes in there, a few which I'd like to share with you! They all contain some minor editing, but nothing that I think the authors wouldn't approve. - Debbie

Chilled Beet and Buttermilk Soup

serves 4 to 6 (can be increased/decreased proportionally without problem)

4 C chopped cooked beets*
1 C unsweetened apple juice [Billy Bob's!]
2 C buttermilk
1 tbsp. minced fresh dill
¼ C minced scallions or chives
salt to taste
finely chopped cucumber (for garnish)

*about 4-5 medium beets, more if smaller.

In a blender or food processor, combine the beets, apple juice, and buttermilk and purée until smooth. Transfer to a bowl or storage container and stir in the dill and scallions or chives. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. Add salt to taste and serve topped with finely chopped cucumber.

Steamed Broccoli with Skordalia Thessalonike Sauce

The recipe here is basically for the sauce. The Moosewood folks say, "it can be used on steamed or raw vegetables, and on broiled, poached or baked fish, but we especially like this sauce on steamed broccoli."

According to Moosewood, "Skorda, the Greek word for "garlic" is – for good reasons – the root of *skordalia*, the creamy garlicky potato sauce popular throughout much of Greece and Macedonia."

Makes 2 generous cups

2 C peeled diced potatoes
4 garlic cloves
1 ¼ C plain yogurt
1 tbsp. chopped fresh dill
1 tbsp. chopped scallions
½ tsp. salt, or more to taste
¼ tsp. ground black pepper, or more to taste (oh, and lots of broccoli, for steaming!)

Combine potatoes and garlic in a saucepan with water to cover. Bring to a boil, and then reduce the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, until very soft. Drain and transfer to a medium mixing bowl. Mash together potatoes and yogurt with a hand masher (do not do this in a food processor as this makes the texture of the potatoes gluey. Having attempted mashed potatoes in a food processor once I can vouch for this warning! – Debbie). Mash until quite smooth. Stir in the dill, scallions, salt and pepper. Serve immediately at room temperature or chill to serve later, allowing it to return to room temperature just before serving.

Moosewood suggests simply steaming fresh broccoli and then 'drizzling the Skordalia Thessalonike' over it.

Summer Squash with Chermoulla

3 or 4 summer squash of varying types [just for fun and since we have them!]
½ C chopped fresh cilantro [remember, you can use the stems as well as the leaves]
5 garlic cloves, minced or pressed
1 tbsp. grated fresh ginger root
2 tsp. ground cumin
½ C fresh lemon juice (3 to 4 lemons)

½ fresh chile, minced, seeds removed for a milder "hot"
1 med. tomato, chopped [I know we don't have 'em yet, but we will soon!]
salt to taste

In a blender or food processor, combine all ingredients except summer squash and purée to form a smooth sauce. Add salt to taste. Set aside.

Meanwhile, slice and lightly steam your summer squash [or broil or grill if you like. I like to slice squash lengthwise, score the flesh in a diamond pattern, baste lightly with olive oil, sprinkle with a little salt and broil 'em – Debbie]. Serve steamed or otherwise cooked squash, maybe on top of some cooked couscous or steamed rice, with the chermoulla poured over all.

Potato Bean Salad with Curried Mango Yogurt Dressing

serves 4 – 6

3 C cubed potatoes
¼ red onion, thinly sliced (about ½ C)
3 C cut green beans (2" pieces)
2 C cooked chickpeas (16 oz. can, drained)
dressing ingredients:
1 C plain yogurt
3 tbsp. prepared mango chutney
1 ½ tsp. curry powder
2 tsp. finely minced red onion
1 tbsp. fresh lime juice

In a saucepan, bring potatoes and enough cool salted water to cover to a boil on high heat. Lower heat and simmer 15 minutes, adding green beans for last 7 minutes of cooking time so they are done together. Drain, place in a large bowl and immediately stir in sliced red onions. Stir in drained chickpeas and set aside to cool. Combine all dressing ingredients, and when veggies are cool, stir in dressing. Add salt and pepper to taste, and either serve immediately or store, covered, in the refrigerator.